

Class Title: Pregnancy Preparation

Class Topic: Healthy Living

Class Sub- Topic: Anticipatory Guidance on Postpartum Depression

Class Counseling Points/Facilitated Group Discussion Question:

1. What is Depression?
2. What are risk factors for postpartum depression?
3. What are some symptoms of postpartum depression?
4. What is the difference between “baby blues,” and postpartum depression?
5. What are ways to cope with postpartum depression?
6. How is depression treated?
7. What affects can postpartum depression have if untreated?

About 6 million pregnancies occur each year in the United States. It is estimated that 13% of postpartum women deal with depression. Depression affects a woman’s family, her ability to nurture her newborn, and her overall quality of life. Treatments exist for depression. But because many women are not aware of their depression or because of the social shame, many women do not discuss their symptoms with their medical provider.

1. What is depression?

- Feeling sad, blue, unhappy, or down in the dumps for a long period of time. Most of us feel this way at one time or another for short periods.
- Clinical depression is described as a mood disorder in which feelings of sadness, loss, anger, or frustration get in the way with everyday life for a long time. Depression can be mild, moderate, or severe. How severe which can be determined by your medical provider, will effect how you are treated.

2. What are causes for postpartum depression?

- Hormonal changes in a woman's body
- During pregnancy, the amount of two female hormones, estrogen and progesterone increases greatly. In the first 24 hours after childbirth, the amount of these hormones quickly drops back down to their normal non-pregnant levels. The fast change in hormone levels may lead to depression.

- Levels of thyroid hormones may also drop after giving birth.
- Feeling tired after giving birth, broken sleep patterns, and not enough rest often keeps a new mother from feeling full strength for weeks.
- Feeling overwhelmed with a new, or another, baby to take care of and doubting your ability to be a good mother.
- Feeling stress from changes in work and home routines.
- Having feelings of loss — loss of knowing who you are, or were, before having the baby, loss of control, loss of your pre-pregnancy figure, and feeling less attractive.
- Having less free time and less control over time. Having to stay home indoors for longer periods of time and having less time to spend with your partner and loved ones.

3. What are some symptoms of postpartum depression?

- Feeling restless or irritable
- Feeling sad, hopeless, and overwhelmed
- Crying a lot
- Having no energy or drive
- Eating too little or too much
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Trouble staying on task, remembering, or making choices
- Feeling worthless and guilty
- Loss of interest or pleasure in things you use to enjoy
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Having headaches, chest pains, irregular heartbeat (the heart beating fast and feeling like it is skipping beats), or hyperventilation (fast and shallow breathing)
- Being afraid of hurting the baby or oneself and not having any interest in the baby.

4. What is the difference between “baby blues,” and postpartum depression?

- The **baby blues** usually happen right after childbirth and goes away within a few days to a week. A new mother can have mood swings, sadness, crying spells, loss of appetite, sleeping problems, and feel restless, anxious, and lonely. Symptoms are not severe and treatment isn't needed.
- **Postpartum depression** can happen anytime within the first year after childbirth. The difference between the two is that postpartum depression often affects a woman's well-being and keeps her from functioning well for a longer period of time. She also needs to be treated by a doctor.

5. What are ways to cope with postpartum depression?

- Try to get as much rest as you can. Try to nap when the baby naps.
- Stop putting pressure on yourself to do everything. Do as much as you can and leave the rest.
- Ask for help with household chores and nighttime feedings. Ask your husband or partner to bring the baby to you so you can breastfeed. If you can, have a friend, family member, or trained support staff to help you in the home for part of the day.
- Talk to your husband, partner, family, and friends about how you are feeling.
- Do not spend a lot of time by yourself. Get dressed and leave the house. Run an errand or take a short walk.
- Spend time alone with your husband or partner.
- Talk with other mothers, so you can learn from their past experience.
- Join a support group. Call a local hotline or look in your telephone book for services.
- Don't make any major life changes during pregnancy. Major changes can cause extra stress. Sometimes big changes cannot be helped. When that happens, try to arrange support and help before the changes occur.

6. How is depression treated?

There are two common types of treatment for depression.

- Talk therapy. This involves talking to a therapist, psychologist, or social worker to learn to change how depression makes you think, feel, and act.
- Medicine. Your medical provider can give you an antidepressant to help you. These medicines can help relieve the symptoms.
- Women who decide to take antidepressant medication should talk to their medical provider about which ones are safer to take while pregnant or breastfeeding.

7. What affects can postpartum depression have if untreated?

- Can affect a mother's ability to parent. She may lack energy, have trouble staying on track, and not be able to meet her child's needs for love and affection. As a result, she may feel guilty and lose faith in herself as a mother, which can worsen the depression.
- Researchers believe that postpartum depression can affect the infant by causing delays in
 - Language development
 - Problems with emotional bonding to others
 - Behavioral problems
 - Lower activity levels
 - Sleep problems
 - Distress

Resources

<http://www.womenshealth.gov/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/>

Lesson Assessment
Please complete and Return to the WIC Nutritionist

1. Was this self-paced reflective lesson easy to understand?
___Yes ___No

2. Was this lesson helpful to you?
___Yes ___No

3. Would you change anything about this lesson?
___Yes ___No

4. Do you believe you have ever experienced postpartum depression?
___Yes ___No

5. What additional information do you need?
